



Schools Tree Day Foundation – Patterns in nature

Introduction

There has been a dramatic shift in childhood activity from outdoor play to indoor activity in the space of one generation. Planet Arks 'Climbing Trees' research found that 1 in 10 children today play outside once a week or less. There is an emerging body of local and international research linking childhood contact with nature with a range of health and wellbeing benefits, including:

- Positive mental health outcomes
- Physical health benefits
- Enhanced intellectual development
- A stronger sense of concern and care for the environment in later life.



This activity is all about getting students outside to connect with nature in a fun and engaging way. They will build skills in classification by sorting natural objects into groups.

Activity outline

Take your students outside and walk around the schoolyard or a local park seeing how many different colours, shapes and textures you can find in nature. Encourage children to stop and observe, touch and feel objects along the way (although discourage the touching of insects or turning over large stones or pieces of wood). They should feel the texture of bark and leaves. Look at the colour and patterns of flowers. Compare the shapes of different leaves. Look at shadows, clouds, flowers, seedpods, tree branches and pebbles on the ground.



As students describe natural objects, the teacher should collect a few items for sorting activities back in the classroom. Only the teacher should collect the items, in order to ensure that plants are not damaged and the items are clean.

Back in the classroom

Get your students to fill in the Student Worksheet. They need to use words to describe what kinds of shapes, patterns and textures they found. Discuss with your students what colours they saw? Did they see different coloured greens on plants, different coloured petals, seeds and berries? How did things feel? Did they feel soft, smooth, rough, lumpy, prickly hard, warm, cold, etc?

Sorting natural objects

In small groups, students are to sort a collection of natural objects. They should discuss how to sort the objects (colour, texture, plant material, beautiful items and ugly items). Students will find that there are many ways to do this and each group will be different. Next, set some boundaries and look for opportunities that will be challenging, e.g, sorting eight leaves into those that are youngest to oldest. Each group should present their classification system to the rest of the class by explaining how and why they sorting the objects.

Conclusion

Discuss the following with your class:

- Is there any right or wrong way to sort the objects?
- What was their favourite object?
- Why do we need a lot of natural objects around us?



coolaustralia.org
Educating for a sustainable future

